



CHESTNUT HILL

SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

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| Date of last review | June 2025 |
| Date of next review | June 2026 |
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Introduction

This policy is based on the Pupil Registration Regulations (2006), the 1996 Education Act and Children Missing From Education, DfE 2016. There is a clear link between good attendance and educational achievement. Good attendance at school is essential so children can achieve their full potential.

The 1996 Education Act states that:

- Parents and guardians must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session.
- The school must report to the Local Authority children who fail to attend regularly or are absent for more than 10 days without explanations.
- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure parents/carers fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents/carers to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered child is an offence punishable in law.

The school's Home School Agreement stresses the need for children to attend school regularly and on time. This policy sets out the systems in place to monitor children's attendance at school and outlines the procedures for non-attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Headteacher and Head of School:

- Has overall responsibility for attendance
- Receives weekly attendance data from the school administration team.
- Reports to the governing body regarding attendance on a termly basis.

Pastoral Support (PS):

- Make contact with parents/carers of absent children, after initial contact from the admin team.
- Follow procedures for responding to low levels of attendance.
- Writes Attendance Support Action Plans for pupils with persistently low levels of attendance.
- Reports to SLT regarding attendance of individual pupils.

The School Administration Team:

- Phones parents/carers on first day of absence
- Completes registers on ISams twice per day, and in line with codes specified below
- Produces a weekly attendance report for the SLT and Wellbeing Team (ALNCo/Pastoral Support)

Parents:

- Inform the school as early possible of any absence – follows school absence procedure (sent to all parents and reminders sent throughout the year)
- Provide documentary evidence of medical appointments requiring time away from school.
- Submit requests for term-time absence in a timely manner, and with clear details of the exceptional circumstances. This includes holiday requests, via a holiday request form.

Registration Procedures

- Morning and afternoon registers are completed daily, using the 'iSams' electronic information system.
- Pupils arriving after 9:15am will be marked as 'late', unless previously agreed (for example due to medical appointments or transport issues)

- Pupils' attendance or otherwise will be recorded using the designated symbols shown below.

Absence

- On the first day of absence parents should inform the school before 7:45am by telephone or email, stating the reason for absence and when their son or daughter is expected to return to school (if known)
- School will attempt to contact parents if a pupil fails to arrive and no message has been received by 9:15am.
- The school administrator will pass on any messages regarding absence to the class teams.
- If no reason is provided for an absence, it will be recorded as 'N' for one week. If no information is received by the end of this period then the absence is classed as 'unauthorised' and a 'O' replaces the 'N'
- Absence from school for appointments should be notified in advance so that the correct mark is noted on the register. Evidence of the appointment needs to be seen by the school office in some circumstances, and the date, time and location of the appointment recorded on iSams. This procedure forms part of the school's enhanced safeguarding practice.
- Only the Executive Headteacher and Head of School can authorise a child's absence from school, and requests for term-time absence will not be agreed, except in exceptional circumstances.

Responding to Low Rates of Attendance

Given the link between attendance and all forms of progress for our young people, and that close monitoring of attendance forms part of the school's wider safeguarding duties, Chestnut Hill School undertakes to follow-up any unexplained absence as quickly as possible. While we will always take an individualised and supportive approach, typically we will do the following:

- Weekly monitoring of attendance by relevant senior staff, with supportive contact offered to parents as required.
- Half-termly review conducted by Pastoral Support and SLT to agree families in need of support with attendance.
- A wellbeing phone-call on the first day of every absence for every pupil, with subsequent calls until they return
- A phone-call from our Pastoral Support if a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, where supportive strategies will be discussed and agreed.
- A meeting or home visit with the PS and/or SLT if attendance falls below 80% OR remains below 90% following support.
- A further meeting involving the Local Authority during which further support and procedures may be considered
- Request for medical evidence that a child is too ill to attend school may be sought when a child's attendance falls below 90%
- The individual needs of pupils attending Chestnut Hill may mean that a different approach to that outlined above is required. Where this is the case, it will be discussed with parents and agreed with the Local Authority.

Children Missing From Education

Please read ***Children Missing From Education, DfE 2016***, for full details on school responsibilities and duties.

- All children over the age of 5 must be in full-time education.
- If a child requires a part-time timetable for any reason, this must be agreed at an EHCP/IDP meeting with relevant professionals, including representatives from the Local Authority. Part-time timetables should be reviewed at least half-termly, and there should be a plan to support

the child to attend full time as soon as possible.

- The Local Authority will be informed of any child who has been missing from school without a valid reason for 10 days or more, or of any child who fails to attend regularly.
- Where a child is absent and attempts to contact the family have not been successful, school staff will attempt to carry out a home visit. The timing of this visit will depend on individual circumstances but will typically be on the second day of unexplained absence. If this visit is unsuccessful then a call to the Local Authority's Safeguarding Team will be made, and advice sought.

Designated Symbols for Recording Absence

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| / | Present (AM) |
| \ | Present (PM) |
| B | Educated off site (not dual registration) |
| C | Other Authorised Circumstances |
| D | Dual Registration |
| E | Excluded |
| F | Extended Family holiday (Agreed) |
| G | Family Holiday (Not Agreed) |
| H | Family Holiday (Agreed) |
| I | Illness |
| J | Interview |
| L | Late |
| M | Medical/Dental Appointment |
| N | No Reason Given |
| O | Unauthorised Absence |
| P | Approved Sporting Activity |
| R | Religious Observance |
| S | Study Leave |
| T | Traveller Absence |
| V | Educational Visit or Trip |
| W | Work Experience |
| # | School closed |
| Y | Enforced Closure |

Term-Time Absence

The Children's Commissioner for England, in January 2024, talked of 'endemic' levels of school absence across the country, and rates of persistent absence have more than doubled since before COVID (Department for Education) . Nationally, about 1 fifth of children currently miss 10% or more of their school time (centreforsocialjustice.co.uk).

There are multiple, complicated reasons why children miss school, and any conversation about falling attendance that does not also tackle the huge issue of mental health and anxiety amongst our young people is somewhat missing the point.

However, the government guidance in 2024 remains very clear, that parents have a duty to ensure their children access a full-time education that meets their needs. It goes on to clarify that parents can allow their child to miss school on two grounds only - if they are too ill to attend, or if they have advance permission from the Executive headteacher and Head of School. As a school, our role is to support parents in this. We are not in the business of issuing fines, nor are we going to set arbitrary percentages of attendance figures that apply to all children and families, regardless of their circumstances. We will, however, work with you and your son or daughter to make school an attractive, exciting and productive place to be, and set clear, individualised expectations about what 'success' looks like as far as attendance goes.

Current regulations state that holidays during term time can only ever be authorised when two criteria are met- firstly, that an application has been made in advance to the headteacher, and secondly, that there are "exceptional circumstances" to justify the absence. We understand and agree with the need to keep term time absence to a minimum- like any other school the challenge of delivering a meaningful, ambitious curriculum is only made harder when teachers cannot be sure which pupils will be attending on which days. However, at Chestnut Hill School we also know that our pupils are individuals, and the circumstances of every family are unique, and we want to work with together for the best possible outcomes. Specifically, parents need to bear in mind the following when asking us to authorise time away from school:

1. The school need at least two weeks to process and respond to any request for absence,
2. Current rate of attendance will be taken into consideration. There is no specific figure to be achieved, and individual circumstances will be considered.
3. Holidays of more than 1 week (5 school days) are unlikely to be authorised,
4. Multiple holidays in the same school year are unlikely to be authorised.

The form for requesting term time absence can be found [here](#).

Please note:

The leadership team meet every week to look at pupil attendance, and local authorities typically now require detailed absence data to be submitted on a regular basis. In these circumstances, it is all the more important that school and parents work closely together and communicate clearly with each other. While the school's decision not to authorise, an absence would of course not prevent any family from proceeding with their time away, persistent high levels of unauthorised absence may lead to a review of the suitability of a placement.